Providing Core Courses Online in the Small Rural School: Collaborative Roles & Responsibilities

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In the face of worsening economic conditions, small, rural schools struggle to maintain teachers and course offerings. School Media Specialists and School Counselors hold valuable resources to help open the doors of global education to students through online coursework.

Collaboration is key to process!!!

- Classroom teachers can help identify potential students
- School Counselors can help students make decisions regarding course options for course-of-study plans
- School Media Specialists have the technology skills & resources
- Administrators must support the process
- Working Together leads to student success!

Defining Collaboration?

- "Working together and sharing responsibility for results"
  - Anderson-Butcher & Ashton, 2004; Gardner 1999; Lawson & Barkdull, 1999
- The foundation of collaboration is developing a clear understanding of how children, their families and the professionals who work with them are interdependent

Everyone involved is held accountable for the success of the process!

Support for Interprofessional Collaboration

- Collaboration between teachers & media specialists produces a higher degree of meaning, significance and authenticity for assignments
  - Gross & Kientz, 1999
- Collective knowledge of resources is critical for addressing the complex educational and psychosocial dilemmas with which students present.
  - Mostert, 1996

Unfortunately:

Although many professionals are aware of the benefits of collaboration, few have the tools to implement *comprehensive* collaborative efforts both effectively and efficiently.

Collaboration: Individual Roles & Responsibilities

The Media Specialist

- **The Host or Hostess: inviting and welcoming others to share resources and knowledge (Medley, 2002)**
- **Brings understanding of information skills (information literacy) and tools to integrate skills, action and learning. (Doiron & Davies, 1998)**
- **The library offers a physical space for distance learning to occur within the high school**
- **The media specialist assists with access to resources necessary for research and assignments.**

The library is an extension of the classroom!

The School Counselor

- Brings understanding & awareness of academic requirements, future options and needed engagement
- Information concerning the psychosocial and developmental needs of students
- Professional focus on collaboration and teaming (Education Trust, 2004)
- Key professional for future career and educational planning for students
  - Can link career counseling needs to possible online course opportunities.

The Classroom Teacher

- Brings understanding of student strengths, weaknesses, interests and attitudes
  - Drawn from classroom interaction with students
- Important for making decisions determining which students are appropriate to participate in distance learning

The Students

- Vital partners in the process!
- Hold valuable information concerning their needs and abilities
- Should be included in evaluation of collaborative effort
- Can share a wealth of important information!!!!

Media Specialist:

Responsible for the library and for linking students to tools & resources needed for comprehensive future planning.

Classroom Teacher:

Teaches students the skills they need to utilize the resources of the library for future planning.

Students:

Stakeholders in career, educational & future planning.
Vital partners in the process.

School Counselor:

Responsible for facilitating the career, educational, and future planning of students. Knowledge of curriculum requirements.

Distance Learning Opportunities for High School Students as a Result of Collaborative Efforts

UNCG I-School

- Dual enrollment program
  - Earn college credit while in high school (5 quality points honors credit HS & 3 credit hours college)
- BENEFITS
  - Completely online
  - Provides needed developmentally appropriate structure for high school students
    - I-Courses must be taken in a specific period each day
    - Must be monitored by a high school employee (Facilitator)
  - Classes are engaging and highly interactive
  - No costs to student
  - Introduction Clip & Testimonial Check out these clips for more info!
  - Website for further exploration: http://web.uncg.edu/dcl/web/ischool/index.php

Please pause the show to explore the hyperlinks.

UNCG I-School, cont.

- CHALLENGES
  - School must initiate partnership & provide facilitator
  - School systems must provide training to facilitator, counselor, and librarian/technology facilitator
  - School systems must provide adequate technology

NC Virtual Public High School

- Over 25,000 students in North Carolina are enjoying NC Virtual Public School
- NCVPS offers high school-level courses for high school credit
- Courses become accessible that are not offered in the school district: Both Core Courses & Electives!
- No cost to student
- Students are empowered and in control of their own learning
- N.C. Virtual Public School
  www.ncvps.org

View NCVPS video for an overview:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BqH-mSK_G2A

NC Virtual High School, cont.

- CHALLENGES
  - School must initiate partnership & provide facilitator
  - School systems must provide training to facilitator, counselor, and librarian/technology facilitator
  - School systems must provide adequate technology

NC Community College

- N.C. Department of Public Instruction and the N.C. Community College and UNC systems
- Earn Online allows high school students to take college-level courses online and earn both high school and college credits.
- No cost to student
- Learn and Earn Online http://NCLearnandEarn.gov

NC Community Colleges, cont.

- CHALLENGES
  - Students must be self motivated
  - School systems are not obligated to provide facilitator, thus responsibilities fall to counselor and librarian/technology facilitator
  - School systems must provide adequate technology

School Counselor's Role….

- Solves scheduling problems
- Provides access to homebound students
- Broadens the horizons of rural students
- Helps to identify appropriate students and prepare those students for the expectations of college level courses
  - Technology skills
  - Independent learning

School Librarian's Role…

- Assist students with skill development in the use of technology
  - Word processing
  - Web-based learning tools
  - Navigation of the web
- Helps students develop refined searching skills for research and engagement in distance learning course assignments
- Awareness of copyright and ethical issues

AGAIN: Collaboration is key to process!!!

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Important Personal Characteristics for Successful Collaboration

- Flexibility
- Willingness to work with others
- Knowledge and awareness of the value of a systemic, integrated approach
- Comfort and foundational understanding of technology and distance learning

Barriers to Collaboration & Distance Learning in High Schools

- "Turf-driven boundaries" often polarize faculty relationships.
  - Bemak, 2000
- Communication problems, limited time for planning
- Limited technology
- Need for **SUSTAINED** commitment
- Personal reluctance among professionals
  - Can be related to unfamiliarity with the means of incorporating technology into curriculum and expectations of students and benefits for students

Barriers, continued…

- Failure of training programs to incorporate:
  - Opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration on the pre-service level.
  - Exploration of distance education opportunities and benefits for high schools: Many early educators, media specialists and school counselors are simply not aware of these opportunities!
- Subsequently, many professionals have little understanding of how to engage in such efforts.

It is crucial that students develop awareness of the need for collaboration and the means of implementing such collaborative efforts while in training rather than after they enter the professional arena.

Bemak, 2000

Addressing Barriers to Collaboration

For effective collaboration to occur, professionals must begin to talk each others' languages and understand and respect each others' expertise in order to combine talents to improve schools.

This learning needs to happen at the pre-service level and be supported through professional development.

High School students in North Carolina must be granted full freedom to access the amazing distance learning resources available to them.

Global learning in local settings: A challenge we must accept!

Distance Learning opens doors to the world and offers key foundational building blocks through core course offerings.

How can you help students access these resources?

Thank you for viewing our presentation! References available upon request.

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